Cameron, Isabel
More about the doctor.
3d ed.

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THIRD EDITION

MORE ABOUT THE DOCTOR

BY

ISABEL CAMERON

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THE DOCTOR

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ISABEL CAMERON

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T. D. DAVIDSON, PUBLISHER, ELGIN
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To Miss A. M. Russell, whose teaching has influenced all my life, whose example has ever been my inspiration, this little book is affectionately dedicated by her grateful pupil.

I. C.

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FOREWORD.

An editor once asked me to write a poem. The suggestion so alarmed me, I nearly swooned. The publisher of "The Doctor" has asked me to do something quite as difficult—he has asked me to write a foreword to the new series of sketches. I have bitten the end of my pen, I have gazed at the virgin fairness of the paper in front of me, I have frowned into what artists call "the middle distance," but nothing happened! Then one suggested that I should at least chronicle my gratitude for the reception "The Doctor" has got, and I can speak now. I do appreciate that—it amazes me, it makes me glad and proud and humble.

When "The Doctor" was first launched on the troubled waters of literature, I prayed that my mere "snow flake on the river" might make an easy and quick port; that some one might read of this good man and feel helped, but that it should have got the world-wide welcome it has got certainly never entered the heads of any of us who were connected with the launching of this small barque.

The new series is just a handful of stories I have re-told. No one is more conscious of their scrappiness than myself, but perhaps my readers will be charitable, as the original would have been, and will see that there are certain dear, intimate and lovely things I could not set down. All that need be said is that in life, so in

death, he was joyous and unafraid. He entered into the unseen as a conqueror, dying as he had lived, with the high courage which was always his.

There are blithe tales, too, which we would gladly have passed on. Gay stories which show that the Peter Pan spirit ever lived in the Doctor. In all that was lovely and young, he never changed. The years only gave him a riper judgment, a wider sympathy—they never robbed him of his joyous youth.

" Has your mother any pickled missionary for tea ? " he once asked a small boy whom I know rather well. " No," said the child, feeling that his mother was rather remiss.

" In all proper manses," the Doctor complained, " one always gets pickled missionary for tea. Did you ever hear of the missionary who was captured by the cannibals ? They put him in a cage to make him fat. Day after day passed, and still he was not killed. ' Why don't you kill me ? ' the missionary inquired. The cannibal chief scratched his head and said apologetically ' We should have done it, I know, but the fact of the matter is—the wife has mislaid the cookery book ! ' "

An awe-stricken little voice asked, " Did they kill the poor man ? "

" Yes, and ate him too ! Pass the butter." The Doctor was quite cheerful about the whole matter. There was a pause for just a heart-beat's length of time, and then the room rang with laughter, the old man's and the child's, curiously alike in quality, and heart cried to heart, " It's me—it's me," and the foundations of a glad gay friendship were " well and truly laid."

I had been writing for *The Sunday at Home* for

some years, when I got to know the late Rev. Robert Cowan, of the High Church, Elgin. He had retired to Forres, and was available for "supply"; happy, indeed, the church who got such a "supply."

After he passed away, I wrote a little sketch, "The Doctor's Birthday," which was printed in the *U.F. Record*, and the editor asked for more. "The King's Messenger" appeared in the *Sunday at Home* soon after. A friend of Mr. Cowan's said to me one evening, "Why don't you publish those sketches in the form of a booklet, and get it ready for Christmas?" That was the seed thought of the enterprise; so our little barque was launched, and has sped to the farthest reaches of the earth.

The new series has been written just as "The Doctor" was written; a pure labour of love, another stone on the cairn of commemoration.

ISABEL CAMERON,
U.F. Manse,
HOPEMAN.

The Doctor's Promise.

HE Doctor was visiting the outposts of his parish one spring morning, when he met Bill the Pedlar, whose other name was William Stewart, and between whom and the Doctor there were the happiest relationships.

"Well, Bill, what is in your pack to-day? Pipe organs or grand pianos, or only bagpipes?" asked the Doctor, with twinkling eyes. It was a standing joke between Bill and his customers that he would never admit he had not what was asked for; and his pack held everything from a tie-pin (gold, with diamonds, price twopence) to harvester's gloves with fingers like hose-pipes.

Bill laughed at the Doctor's sally and swung off his pack. "I have something in the music line, though it's perhaps not exactly what you are mentioning. See to this now!" He handed the Doctor a bundle of songs.

Carefully adjusting his spectacles, the Doctor took the bundle. "But, Bill, these are Gaelic songs! What's the use of showing them to me?"

Bill came from Gairloch in Ross-shire, and his speech

held the cunning lilt of mountain burns. A rascal he was, but a winsome reprobate withal, and for such the Doctor had a special fondness.

" Listen, sir, if you please," cried the pedlar. " Here's a beauty of a song. It's called ' The Fairies' Lullaby.' It's all about a poor woman, yonder, who lost her child. The fairies took it and left a changeling creature in the cradle, and though the poor woman looks and looks she never finds the little one. She finds the otter's track, and the swan's flight, and the trail of the morning mist, but not a sight of her darling. Here's another beauty, ' The Mist-covered Mountains.' " Bill threw back his head and sang the first stirring bars of that famous song, " Hail to the Mountains."

" Hail to the mountains with summits of blue,
To the glens with their meadows of sunshine and dew,
To the women and men, ever constant and true,
Ever ready to welcome me home."

" Fine, fine ! " cried the Doctor, and Bill, now well into his stride, carolled forth a verse of " The Tocherless Lass " to the scandal of a flock of busy crows and the immense delight of his other listener.

" But here is the best of all," Bill said, selecting a leaflet from the bottom of the bundle. " Have you ever heard the psalm tune ' French ' sung in the Gaelic and with the ' putting out of the line ' ? "

Without waiting for a reply, Bill, with incredible flourishes and grace notes, sang the old tune, chanting each line first and then singing the words. There is about the wild rapture of Gaelic singing an appeal to the emotions which it is impossible to describe ; so if the Doctor offered no spoken word of praise, his silence was eloquent, and Bill was well pleased.

" I'm seeing," he said presently, and trying to speak in an everyday tone of voice, " I'm seeing you have Duncan Ross staying here now."

" Yes? " said the Doctor, encouragingly. " Do you know him? "

" Fine that! Isn't he from Aultbea? I mind fine when he married. She was a lass from my own place, Gairloch. Kate Maclennan was her name, and Duncan was a ghillie with her father first, and then he got the keeper's place when the old man died. He's pensioned off now, he was telling me, and came here for the sake of getting a house."

Now the Doctor was on his way that very morning to see Duncan Ross, who had come at the last term to a little house near Lagan Burn, the farthest outpost of the parish. Duncan had steadily repulsed all the old minister's overtures of friendship. Polite he had always been, willing to discuss the weather, the price of stock and crop, but nothing more.

He lived alone too, with a weekly visit from a woman to " redd up," which made it more difficult to get " ben " with him. And here this spring morning Dr. Lindsay must needs meet Bill the pedlar, and from that most unlikely quarter get the key to the situation.

" Aye," went on Bill, " when his wife died, the boy was a little fellow, ten or eleven maybe. His father kept him at his lessons, but there was nothing in the boyan's head but music, music, music! The glen schoolmaster was from Inverness, and didn't he take all the good singers to the Gaelic Mod in Inverness, and who think ye got the first prize for singing but little Alastair? (He was called Alastair Maclennan after Kate's father.) I never heard the little fellow singing,

but I have heard his father Duncan singing in the church on a sacrament Sabbath day, and I just hope the angels may sing as sweet! 'Coleshill' was a favourite of his. There's a tenor, yonder, that grips the heart. Duncan would sing it, 'spose it was like this now." Bill closed his eyes and chanted the first lines of the tune. "Then he would swing off into the tenor, and there was one John Macdonald, in the congregation, a grand singer of the bass, and the women would do their part—man—man——" There was evidently no English to do justice to his rapture, and he broke into a flood of Gaelic. "They're telling me," he went on, "that there's churches with organs and fiddles and trash of that kind, but I'm telling you, sir, there's nothing on all the earth like the voices of men and women praising the Lord in the Gaelic tongue to the tune of 'Coleshill' on a Sabbath day!"

Poor Bill was away to his boyhood's days, carried thither as only the magic of music can carry us. Since then he had gone to "the far country," but for just a flash he was back to the kirk of his fathers and the glad rapture of the bairn-time. . . . Next minute, he was swinging his pack on his shoulders again, and with eyes which refused to meet the Doctor's, he was facing the road to the town.

"What became of Duncan's boy?" the Doctor called after him.

Bill turned reluctantly. "Himself and his father did not get on well at all. Alastair went to learn to be a carpenter with David Macintyre, but 'deed, the only thing he ever made was a fiddle for himself. His wages he saved up, and when he had plenty, what did he do but go and buy a stand of bagpipes? Fifteen pounds,

and second-hand at that ; but beauties of pipes, with mother o' pearl inlaid in them and as many as a score of yards of tartan ribbon hanging from the drones and the chanter ! I knew the man in Inverness he bought them from. Well, one Hogmanay-time didn't he go off with some other young lads to the hunting of the white hares, and his father—threw the pipes into the peat fire. . . ."

" Shame ! " said the Doctor warmly.

" It was worse," Bill said. " It was murder."

" And what happened then ? "

" Alastair ran away ; his father and himself had a terrible row, and the laddie went off. Mind, there was no ill in him, only he would not stick to his trade. He let everything go if only he could get music. Some folks say he went to Glasgow, but no one knows, not even his father. Oh, thank you kindly, sir. Indeed I will not be spending it at the Inn. No fears of me," and once more Bill faced the town road.

It was with this moving tale fresh in his mind that the Doctor knocked at Duncan's door. He found the Highlander if possible more aloof and more unapproachable that day than ever. " I wish I could speak Gaelic," the Doctor said, when after a baffling half-hour he rose to take his departure.

" But all your people here are English-speaking," Duncan reminded him.

" You are not, and you are one of my people."

" Oh, I am but a bird of passage here, sir. A solan goose flying northwards, or a lonely swan. Why should you trouble about me ? "

MORE ABOUT THE DOCTOR

II.

By a series of strange happenings, it was autumn ere the Doctor was back in Lagan Burn, and from Peter Bain, who had a croft next to Duncan's house, he heard that the old gamekeeper was ill and confined to bed. Peter was distressed because the sick man would not allow either himself or his wife to render him the least service. " I want nothing whateffer," he would say politely. " Thank you kindly all the same."

" An' if ye but seen the een o' him," Peter said bitterly, " ye wad ken that *that* wasna true ! He minds me o' a man that's dying o' hunger, no' ordinary hunger, but—but—I think it's hert hunger. D'ye ken if he has ony freens, sir ? "

" Bill the Pedlar says he's an old friend."

" I dinna think muckle o' his freens then ! A drunken auld rascal ! "

" Bill is a great friend of mine."

" Aye, I ken ye're nane perticular either."

The Doctor chuckled. " Well, Peter, I think I must try once more to get Duncan to admit me to his friendship."

" 'Deed, Doctor, ye sudna fash," Peter said warmly. " That Heelanders think ye're no' worth if ye canna speak the Gaelic ! "

Dr. Lindsay was shocked at the change in Duncan's appearance. Always a gaunt man, he seemed now a veritable shadow. His hollow eyes dominated his face, and they seemed to burn as if the spirit behind them were being consumed. There was about him, too, an air of pathetic loneliness which went straight to the Doctor's heart.

Yet the old antagonistic atmosphere was there as

strong as ever, and in spite of himself the Doctor felt his spirit chilled. Subject after subject he tried; always to be met with the same baffling, polite reply. The man seemed to be ringed round with ice.

"We'll have a word of prayer before I go," the Doctor said. To the Heavenly Father whose presence was always so near him, he spoke now lovingly, confidingly. Did he imagine it, or was there a softer look in Duncan's eyes as he shook hands in farewell?

"Is there anything at all, Duncan, you would like?" he asked, making as it were one more bid for his friendship.

Duncan shook his head. "You cannot give me what I want."

"Perhaps not; but my Father can."

Duncan gave a little shamed laugh. "I am wanting that one would sing to me, in the Gaelic, and to the tune of 'Coleshill,' the 118th Psalm, where it says, 'I in distress called on the Lord.' Now," with a little defiant smile, "can you do that for me?"

A less dauntless man than the Doctor would have gasped at the request. If you think the old minister looked dismayed, you don't know Dr. William Lindsay in the least.

"I'll learn it myself," he cried, with glorious optimism, "or if I cannot I'll get some one who can. *I promise, Duncan!*"

Even Duncan could not help catching some of the brightness of the old man's smile, and returning it wanly. It was the first time he had ever responded even faintly to his visitor.

But outside the door, the brightness fell from the Doctor's face, and he looked troubled. "Father,"

he whispered, "show me how I'm to keep my promise."

He was still brooding over the problem when he reached the cottage of Robbie Kemp. Robbie, known to the Doctor as a skilful performer on the "cheery wee melodeon," was now grieve to the farmer of Bruntlands, and was married to the girl of his heart (she who had knitted the famous socks whose story is told elsewhere).[1]

As the Doctor opened the garden gate, he was greeted by an outburst of martial music which put the melodeon far into the shade. Wondering much, he cautiously opened the door and peered in. Robbie was sitting on one side of a cosy fire and his wife on the other, and on the table between them was a gramophone, and the music to which they both listened enraptured was the brass band of the Coldstream Guards.

If I were a poet I would sing a pæan of praise in honour of the gramophone, that wonderful treasure which one finds scattered in all sorts of lonely places, bringing happiness and cheer into lives drab and grey enough sometimes! The Coldstream Guards, however, met with scant courtesy at the hands of Robbie Kemp when he saw who was his visitor. With glad face and outstretched hand he sprang to welcome him, while his wife, a sonsy, kindly-faced girl, laid down her knitting (it was a small sock now for the most wonderful baby in the world, who at the moment lay sucking his thumb and listening to the band), and in a minute the Doctor was in the place of honour and was being asked what tune would he like. "I hae the auld ane that I used to play in the bothy; d'ye mind on it, sir?" The eyes of the men met in an understanding look. "I never

[1] "The Doctor Supplies," in *The Doctor*.

telt ony wan yer favourite tune," he said proudly, " but I hae the record o' it sung by Hairy hissell ! Wad ye——"

The Doctor laughed wickedly and nodded. In a minute the kitchen rang with the merry song, and the listeners joined in the infectious laughter which seemed to come so magically from the little instrument.

" I canna help lauchin' when I hear Hairy," Robbie said, wiping the tears from his eyes.

" It's good to laugh," the Doctor said stoutly, for indeed he had been laughing as helplessly as his host. " What a fine instrument you have, Robbie ; is it a new one ? "

" Ma brither Jock, him that's the bobby in Glesca, sent it at Christmas," Robbie said proudly. " It's the newest make. I dinna like yon anes wi' the tin horn. I aye think they sound like a man singin' through his nose. Here's a bonnie tune noo. Jock's great freen in Glesca is a Heeland chap, an' the precentor in the Heelanders' Kirk there. Jock's in his choir, and at the last Mod this choir got first place for church singing."

Next minute the kitchen was full of the grave, sweet melody of the psalm tune " Effingham," a tune well beloved and full of sacred memories for all the listeners. It reminded the Doctor of his memorable visit to a Highland parish at a communion season when David Macintyre came back from the wilderness.[1]

Robbie, well pleased to do the honours, placed another record on. " This is a real beauty," he explained. " I canna mak' oot a wird oo'd—it's Gaelic, but ye wad jist ken it's—it's——" He stopped

[1] " The King's Messenger," in *The Doctor*.

in sudden confusion, this blate musician who had such a keen sense of lovely things.

Gaelic music has two sources of inspiration, love and war, and it was of the first of these the new song told.

" Is toigh leam Dia, air son gu'n d'eisd "
(I love the Lord, because my voice).

A voice like a silver trumpet chanted the words, and then the line was sung by a choir invisible, in beautifully balanced and glorious harmony. Then the next line was chanted, and again the others took up the song. The chanter's voice, a clear tenor, could easily be detected swinging off into his own part after chanting the line.

" That's ' Kilmarnock,' " Robbie explained. " There's another tune on the other side. Yes, by the same choir."

" A'm' eigin ghair mi air an Triath,"

chanted the singer. " I in distress called on the Lord " is the translation, a wailing, wistful, haunting melody, and it was sung as befitted the traditions of the old home-land, and the memories which cluster round our solemn Sabbath days, and the tune—I am almost afraid to write it down—the tune was—" *Coleshill.*"

The Doctor was swept by tides of emotion. The Father had not failed him ; once more He had kept faith with His servant. The glad wonder of it made his heart swell, so that when the song came to an end, he could not speak a single word.

This was not the first secret the Doctor had shared with Robbie Kemp (the Doctor had a hundred ways of binding our hearts to his own one), and when he called at Duncan's house the following evening, Robbie slipped in after him and took his place in the "ben-end."

He carried beneath his arm a little square box, oh, quite an innocent-looking box, and in his " oxter pocket " was the precious record.

Duncan greeted the Doctor with a more friendly smile than was his wont. How he could have withstood him so long was a perfect marvel to the rest of us !

" And can you be singing the Gaelic psalm already ? " he asked.

The Doctor's face was that of a child's who has a happy secret. " I said if I could not sing it myself, I would get some one who could ; wasn't that the promise ? "

Opening his little Bible, he read the gracious words of the 118th Psalm, and scarcely had he finished when a voice like a clarion rang through the little house. Then the tune of " Coleshill " swept over the listeners like a cloud of glory.

Duncan started up in bed. Two red spots appeared in his hollow cheeks. He turned anguished eyes on the Doctor's face as if to ask an explanation. But the music mastered him ; he dared not speak !

" I in distress called on the Lord,"

chanted the unseen singer. Stately, beautiful, and solemn the notes rang out.

" He in a large place did me set,"

the voice went on, after the line had been sung in glorious harmony. Duncan was listening, his breath coming quick and hurried, and in those hollow, haunted eyes of his there shone " the light that ne'er was seen on sea or land."

" It's Alastair's voice," he said, speaking in a fearful whisper. " Is himself there ? "

The Doctor hurried Robbie Kemp in to make known

to Duncan the plot. " But the voice was Alastair's voice," Duncan repeated. " Wasn't it myself that learnt him yon tune and the tenor of it ? "

The Doctor lifted the record, and putting on his glasses he read the title. " ' Coleshill,' sung by the Glasgow Gaelic Choir ; leader, Alastair Maclennan Ross."

The old gamekeeper's face was quivering piteously, seeing which the Doctor, after somewhat hastily clearing his throat, said : " The Father never does things by halves."

" He's my boy, and I—I—burnt his bagpipes."

" Pooh ! " cried the Doctor. " So long as you didn't boil them and make them into haggis for a Burns' night supper, it doesn't matter ! "

* * * * * *

It was Robbie Kemp who wrote to his brother Jock that very night, and who was so glad and proud to have a share in the happy secret ; and when the Doctor next called at Duncan's house he was welcomed and his hand nearly wrung off by a tall young man who looked so like a younger edition of his father there could be no mistaking of him. Alastair Maclennan Ross had come home, and the very thing which had divided father and son in the old times now united them. " I'm thinking," Duncan said as he shook hands, " I'm thinking, sir, that though you cannot speak the Gaelic with your tongue, you're understanding it in your heart, and that's the best of all."

The Doctor's Holiday.

ONE of the ways the Doctor had of making us love him was his unexpectedness. No one could ever foretell what he would do or say next. Companionship with him became a thing of happy surprises.

The particular summer of which I am writing had been hot and rainless, and by August the Doctor was feeling the need of a holiday. One of his old " boys," now a minister in a city charge, offered to come and take his place for a month, an offer the Doctor thankfully accepted. This young friend came on Saturday, and as the Doctor did not go till Monday, it gave him the welcome opportunity, which comes so seldom to a minister, of sitting in his own pew, and listening to a sermon. " You'll pray for rain," were his last words, as they parted at the vestry door. " I'm afraid for the crops."

The Doctor realised, as few do, that it is the folks in the pew who make the man in the pulpit either a success or a failure ; so I need not tell you that the sermon was a memorable one. And in the prayer that followed, the preacher pleaded for refreshing showers for the panting country and the parched crops. The Doctor whispered a great " Amen."

And, as they were coming out of church, there was the welcome patter of rain drops. The earth, as if to show its gratitude, sent up a sweet damp smell, and one could almost see the plants drinking the welcome rain. With great content, but no surprise, the Doctor looked about him as he opened his umbrella. Then he said, in a complaining tone of voice: "I didn't think the Lord was such a respecter of persons! Here have I been praying for rain for the last month, and no notice taken! But when a young whipper-snapper from a city church, forsooth, prays for rain, behold an immediate answer! Ay, and he hasn't even provided himself with an umbrella," he went on, regarding his young friend with merry eyes. "Come and get a share of mine."

Then, very tenderly and very appreciatively, he spoke of the sermon; golden wine, he called it, the finest of the vintage.

"I'm sorry you preached so well, because all the folks will go home now, and they will come back in the evening and bring all their friends with them, and they will expect as good a sermon as they got just now. Of course, you can't possibly have another as good."

But this young man knew his Doctor!

"It will be quite as good," he said sturdily, if you will strengthen me by your prayers again."

And the Doctor, a curiously soft light in his eyes, gave him a fatherly pat. A young man after his own heart, this! One to whom he could safely entrust his congregation.

With his capacity for making and keeping friends, the Doctor was no more than five minutes, figuratively speaking, in Janefield, his holiday quarters, when he

discovered one of his innumerable family to whom he had been a true father in God. This was a young man who had listened entranced, one March evening, to the Doctor as he preached on " The river clear as crystal,"[1] and who had offered his arm to the tired minister on his homeward way. They had talked astronomy, and the Doctor had delighted the listening lad with his marvellous knowledge of this science. He had sent him a book, too. Little unremembered acts of kindness done, which were now bearing a rich harvest, for John Maclean was preparing to go into the Church. A Tent Mission had been started in Janefield, to which students came month after month and gave of their services. Young knights, they were, as truly as if they rode forth against an armoured foe ; full of enthusiasm for the Captain.

I need not tell you that the Doctor (he had come for a holiday) immediately took his place in the firing-line shoulder to shoulder with John Maclean, giving, with all the splendid generosity of his nature, the riper experiences of his head and heart. Night after night found him in the tent, and a great tide of revival broke over the place ; old Christians, weary by the way, perhaps, were rejuvenated and new souls were born again.

Among the visitors to Janefield was Miss Janet Hunter, a wealthy lady who came every year to the place. " The only thing I possess is money," she told herself bitterly, and even this money had been the means of separating her from the only man she had ever cared for, and who had cared for her. She was proud and rich, he was proud and poor ; a woman's long tongue,

[1] " The Doctor Supplies," in *The Doctor*.

dropping a poisonous word here and another there, had done the rest ; and so they parted. It did not make things easier for Janet Hunter to know that the man had gone under—disappeared from all his old haunts.

A sudden shower as she was passing the Mission Tent sent her in for shelter. The absolute sincerity of the Doctor and his friend impressed her in spite of herself, and she listened—at first with curiosity and then with interest.

Next night she was back, and the next too.

On the fifth night she stayed behind, begging for a word from the Doctor. From that interview she went forth with the vision glorious in her eyes, and a new hope in her heart. " I have found the Messiah," she whispered.

Next night she was absent. The following day there was no trace of her, and the Doctor was on the point of seeking her out when a note was handed to him. It was from her, begging for a brief visit.

He found her heavy-eyed and miserable-looking. Her face had the look in it of one who has lost all that makes life possible. A Bible lay on the table beside her ; but it was closed.

" It is all a mistake," she said dully. " I should not have said I had found the Messiah ; it was all a delusion."

She bent her head, great tearing sobs convulsed her frame. The Doctor let the storm spend itself. Then he said, in the most matter-of-fact way :

" Well, it's quite easy to put the matter right ! No need for this anguish ! Just say to yourself that you don't want Him—that you won't look for Him,

that you don't like His Book, nor His friends nor His servants, nor His Day. That's all ! "

She gazed at him in blank astonishment.

" But—but—I *couldn't* do that ! " she gasped.

And then the Doctor laughed ; tenderly though.

" My dear," he said, looking at her with his wise, understanding eyes, " don't you understand that all these doubts and fears are just temptations from the pit ? Oh, I know, I've been through the experience ; so had Paul. We're in good company, you see."

He opened the Bible at Hebrews vi, and read from verse 4, ending with verse 9 : " But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you." And out of those somewhat forbidding verses he preached a sermon which satisfied Janet Hunter's head as well as her heart.

" I'll tell you a dream I had once," he ended. " I dreamt, one Sunday evening—you will notice the devil is always extra busy on that day—I dreamt I was lost and in hell. I went up to one who stood by the door and I asked, ' Where do people go on Sabbath days ? '

" ' We have no such days here.'

" ' Then where do I meet any good people ? '

" He shook his head.

" ' There are no good people here '

" ' I should like something to read ; I should like a Bible.'

" With that he opened the door wide.

" ' What do you here ? ' he shouted. ' You want the Sabbath Day, the company of saints, the Word of God. *Out of this*—hell is no place for you ! '

" Why," he went on, " did you send for me ? Why do I find a Bible beside you ? Why are you missing the

services? 'But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you,' and that's the application of my sermon. And we must tell the Father that here are we, a pair of stupid, wandering bairns, losing ourselves in the fog of doubt, but longing for the sunshine of His love."

* * * * * *

The Tent Mission was coming to an end, and Janet Hunter, a happy woman now and mindful of the "ministering to the saints," conceived the idea of asking all the maid-servants of the various boarding-houses to come and have tea with her. She asked the loan of the Mission Tent for the feast, and ordered (from London, no less!) hampers of cakes and goodies. I never could understand why she chose those particular guests; neither could they, and *not one* of them came, NOT ONE.

"Experience," Janet Hunter said, with a rueful little laugh, looking at the prettily laid out tables, "is getting a comb after you're bald! What am I to do with those mountains of cakes and rivers of tea?"

The Doctor and John Maclean, who had come to help, exchanged troubled looks, Outside, in another corner of the field, a steam organ was blaring forth with brazen voice, "Sweet Marie," while merry little folks on prancing steeds, with flashing (leather) nostrils and flowing tails curvetted madly round the ring. Bramwell's Famous Menagerie, Circus and Show had come to the place. From early afternoon till late at night that terrible steam organ shattered silence into fragments.

"That's 'God Save the King!'" the Doctor said. "It must be the end of the afternoon performance."

He went and stood for a little in the door, looking out into the sunshine. The sunshine was in his face as he came back.

"There was Another who made a feast, and the guests all, with one accord, began to make excuses. He sent out to the highways and hedges and gathered a company of guests. Might we do the same? We won't have far to go. I think I can answer for plenty of willing guests. Are you willing, Miss Hunter?"

She was.

The show folks were just getting ready their tea, rather a sketchy affair it seemed, when an old minister, with the friendliest face in the world, came and asked them to have tea in the Mission Tent. They were to be the guests of the lady "next door."

Mr. Bramwell, whose wife had been planning to give him a raw "ingin" with his tea, said she didn't mind, and the gorgeous lady who did tricks on horse-back said she'd prefer something stronger than tea, but seeing as nothing stronger was offered—why, she didn't mind either.

So the Doctor marshalled his queer guests, from the proud owner, who wore a fur-trimmed overcoat and a diamond ring, to Massa Johnson, the "coloured gent," who looked after the piebald horses.

"Is everybody here?"

"Yes, every one 'cept Joe the clown, who says he's a headache, and has gone to the caravan over there. Proud chap, Joe—keeps hisself to hisself."

I wish I could show you the Doctor and the show folks as they gathered round the table! Before his genial presence every shadow of constraint and embarrassment fled. Yet no one forgot his own place,

no one was familiar ; every one was gloriously happy.

" Gee ! Wot a spread ! " the trapeze gentleman whispered, and, but for the restraining influence of the tight-rope lady, he would have turned a few handsprings then and there.

The Doctor said grace. And then there was " one crowded hour of glorious life ! " No need to wonder what was to become of the mountains of cakes and rivers of tea ! The show folks solved the problem. The atmosphere of the tent was that of a happy home, with the hungry children gathering round the father's board.

" Not another drop, if *you* please," Mrs. Bramwell said, leaning back in her chair and giving a satisfied sigh ; " I'm full up."

This set the others laughing, and jokes and laughter followed, tongues wagged gaily.

Under cover of the noise the Doctor whispered that there was one guest who had not come, and he told of the clown who had a headache. Miss Hunter, all the soreness of her despised hospitality forgotten, piled a tray with cakes and tea, and made her way to the " Yaller caravan, miss, that one there."

Carefully she climbed the steps and knocked. Rather a cross voice called : " Come in." For a moment she could see nothing. Then from somewhere in the darkness came a voice which said, " Please do leave me alone. I'm quite all right ; at least, I shall be by seven o'clock."

Janet never knew how nor where she laid down the tray. Her heart was drumming in her ears, her knees were shaking. There are some things one never forgets—voices are one.

"*Joe*!" she said—that was all, but she was stretching out her hands.

There was a hurried movement from out the darkness, and then a man, gaunt, hollow-eyed, but with the unmistakable stamp of breeding on him was by her side. "Janet!" he breathed hoarsely.

* * * * * *

Meantime in the Mission Tent the show folks were entertaining the Doctor and his friend. Balancing, conjuring tricks, extraordinary tying of knots, which straightened out if you blew on them, contortions from the boneless boy, and even a coon song from Massa Johnson, who had a voice like velvet!

And then the Doctor opened his Bible and read to those poor wayfarers the old story of the feast in the house of Matthew, and of the glad companionship there. Ah! How near was the Master as the Doctor prayed! Hearts were strangely moved and touched by the wonder of the love that sought sinners, and called them to repentance.

One of the greatest of the Doctor's treasures is a "Pass for self and friends to Bramwell's Famous Circus, Menagerie, and Show," made out for all time and for all places wheresoever the show may be, and presented to him by the proprietor himself.

Whether he ever accepted this offer, and attended the Circus, is a secret which only Janet Hunter could tell. She laughs and says, "Don't ask me; ask Joe."

Now Joe is the name of her husband.

The Doctor and Naomi.

"BUT why do you call the bag 'Naomi'? Jack asked Dr. Lindsay.

"Because," said the Doctor, "like Naomi, it goes out full and returns empty. Now you're not to look when I open it."

Carefully he set Naomi on the seat of a chair in front of him and opened it a tiny piece. "If any one *dares* to come at my back and peep in—I'll—I'll eat them up," the Doctor threatened, turning round suddenly to find both Jack and Betty close at his back. He gave a roar of rage, and immediately the bairns scurried back to their seats; but they were not a bit frightened really; this was part of the game, part of the ritual of opening Naomi.

From its leather jaws now emerged two beautifully mysterious looking parcels—one for Betty—one for Jack. Betty's was a tea-pot—a "really tea-pot"—full meantime of chocolates, but ready afterwards to do its duty at any tea-party. Only a little girl who is some day to be a happy housekeeper knows the joy of playing with a tea-pot which really pours out tea. The Doctor—who had a sporting spirit, bravely drank a cup of tea—then and there, and the quantity of that

harmless beverage which Betty herself drank, had to be seen to be believed.

Jack had a knife, with as many as twenty-two (if I remember aright), different things—including a weapon for taking stones out of a horse's shoe (so useful). It was fastened by a chain to the person of its owner, and was altogether a most *scrumptious* thing in knives. Sharp too !—Jack tried its edge on the dining-room table—oh just the *wee'st* little bit,—results, most satisfactory, that is from Jack's point of view ; what his mother thought is of course another matter.

" Put Naomi up into my bed-room, please," the Doctor said—handing the empty bag to Jack. " Put her in a comfortable place, far from draughts. She's apt to take rheumatism when she's empty."

The Doctor had come to " supply " for Jack's father, a minister who was ill, and perhaps that was the reason the rest of the household were so pre-occupied, no one noticed Jack and Betty holding a series of secret meetings. These began on the stair, as Jack was going up with Naomi in one hand and his precious knife in the other.

" Isn't it a beauty ? " he exulted. " Did you notice the thing for gouging holes in straps ? Just *feel* the little blade,—like a razor." Betty refused this tempting offer. " I say, Jack," she began, " couldn't we put something in Naomi—I was awfully sorry when the Doctor said she always came home empty."

Jack's face kindled—" Oh do let's," he cried. " *Hussh* " Betty warned, " come on into the nursery, and let's think."

The result of this secret meeting was many hurried visits to different parts of the house—there was a

shaking forth of the pennies in their " Pirlie pigs "—there were mysterious runnings up and down stairs with queer bulges concealed about their persons. Finally, Jack said, " I'll put in my boxie for Naomi. What d'you say, Betty ? "

" The one you were to make the burglar alarm with ?"

He nodded.

" It's quite a good boxie, and I'll carve " N " on it to show who it's for ; I can easily with my new knife."

Had it not been that the grown-ups were busy with their own affairs, they would certainly have noticed the extraordinary behaviour of the children. As it was—they escaped—and Naomi—quite a plump and fat person, reposed beneath the dressing table in the Doctor's room. The box with the " N," took some doing, so Jack had to leave it out.

Fate favoured the little conspirators, and when Monday morning came Jack volunteered to carry Naomi to the station, in fact he wanted to carry the Doctor's big bag as well, but of course he was not allowed. " You carry Naomi," the Doctor said, " and put her with her back to the engine ; she gets a headache if she faces it."

Just as the train was starting, Jack thrust into the Doctor's hand the little box. " It's for—for,"—but the engine shrieked, and for whom the box was intended, was a mystery. The Doctor put the mysterious parcel into his greatcoat pocket.

Jack drew a breath of absolute relief as the train steamed away, and the plot was not discovered. At the next station a gentleman whom the Doctor knew, joined the train. He was carrying a bag the very same

as Naomi, which without noticing the likeness, he laid down beside that lady.

Yes, you can guess the rest. When they reached their destination, this traveller helped the Doctor out—handed him his *own* little bag—seized Naomi himself, and with a warm handshake hurried away, neither of them noticing the mistake.

James Wallace was always hurrying. That was the great pity of his life. Since his wife had died, leaving him with one little daughter, he had tried to make business fill his empty life. Nellie, a shy, sensitive little mortal, he regarded as more or less of a burden and responsibility. To do him justice, he was so much from home, he did not know how lonely the child was, nor how her little heart hungered for love and companionship. This very day, this Monday with which we are concerned—was Nellie's thirteenth birthday, and the question which had been occupying her mind all day was, would her father remember. When she was smaller, she used to remind him, and the conscience-stricken way he would rush out and buy her something, was touching. But though this was nice, it wasn't the same as if he had remembered himself, and so Nellie resolved not even to hint at the memorable date. Still, when a little girl enters her " teens," it is nice if some one remembers to make a fuss.

She was watching eagerly for her father, and ran to open the door as soon as his hand was on the gate. " Well, little woman," he said, and stopped. There was an eager expectant look in her face, which somehow reminded him of her dead mother, and he stooped and kissed her tenderly, a most unusual thing. " Any letters? " he asked, next minute. " On my desk? "

" That's a good lassie ; run up with my bag, you can take out the things if you like. Tell Kate to hurry with tea."

Nellie with Naomi in her hand ran upstairs, " You can open it," he had said, " and take out the things." He sometimes said that ; Nellie knew he meant her to take out his pyjamas and shaving-tackle.

Still, to-day would perhaps be different. Something told her it was to be different . . . . . Yes, it was.

Instead of uninteresting garments and things, here was a lovely white tissue paper parcel, beneath was a box, then came a beautiful untidy, bulgy parcel which smelt sweetly of lavender, and beneath was one of these delicious animals—the dying pig. Everyone knows and loves this beast. When you blow him up, he slowly fades away from before your eyes, and finally, with a groan, he dies. But you can make him live again, which is the joyful part !

With a happy little gasp, and with hands trembling with excitement, Nellie examined the contents of the parcels. The box had chocolates, the hard-hearted kind which use toffee and almonds for hearts ; the bulgy parcel was a lavender pillow, the other parcel was a woolly scarf, and I have told you about the pig !

A little mouse began to run up and down Nellie's throat, but she was happy, happier than she had been for ages. She gathered her treasures altogether again, and laying them gently into the bag, she clasped Naomi to her starved little heart, hugging and kissing it, as if it had been a baby.

Then, with a lovely flush on her face, and still hugging her presents, she rushed downstairs to thank her father.

" You remembered," she cried, half laughing, half crying, and threw herself into his arms. " I was just hoping and *praying*, Daddy, you would 'member this was my birthday, and you did, and you brought me such lovely, lovely things, oh, Daddy, how kind you are—thank you, thank you," and so the grateful little heart poured itself forth in a very passion of love and thankfulness.

It was lucky for her that her face was hidden in her father's breast, so that she did not see the bewilderment on his.

Like a flash it came to him that he had all unwittingly changed bags with Dr. Lindsay, but oh why had he not remembered ?

" Thirteen, to-day, girlie," he said, after a rapid mental calculation. " Why, you're a young lady now, into your teens."

Shyness, like a disused mantle, had fallen from her, and with starry eyes she looked into his and laughed. It seemed to James Wallace as if he had never known his little daughter, till that moment. How like her mother she was growing, too ! He hugged her close, and they both laughed, and it was thus the Doctor found them.

" It's Nellie's birthday, Dr. Lindsay," Mr. Wallace said,

" And just look at the lovely presents Daddy has brought me," the child cried.

The eyes of the two men met over her head . . . . . One could always trust the Doctor to do the right thing ; and the tense pause was only noticed by Mr. Wallace.

" Many happy returns, lassie," the Doctor said, " why didn't I know it was your birthday, too ? "

Naomi gave a sigh of sheer relief, but only her old master heard it, as he went on, " If you'll run and put your hand in the pocket of my overcoat you'll find a boxie, with " N " carved on it. I think it must be meant for you."

When the child left the room, James Wallace made a clean breast of things.

" Perhaps it was just God's way of reminding you of your little lassie," the Doctor said, with his own gracious smile, " I like to think He used those manse bairns to be His messengers—little Jack and Betty are undoubtedly at the bottom of this mystery, yet it's not a mystery after all, it's just the great Father wanting His bairns to be happy. I must write and tell my little friends that they have done a great thing."

" Greater—than—they—can—ever—know," James Wallace said with a husky voice.

So Naomi went home empty, after all, yet I cannot think of the little bag, and the gallant part it played that Monday, without remembering also that the things that endure, the lovely things, which are worth while, are the things invisible.

"Such Pity."

"ONE—TWO—THREE—FOUR!" boomed from the clock in the Muckle Kirk. It was a dark January morning, and the old cathedral town was sleeping cosily abed, except where a wraith-like shadow, slipping stealthily along, or a moving figure behind a blinded window, told of sin and sickness.

John Macmillan, the policeman, whose beat extended from the Manse Road to the Riverside Walk, counted the strokes, then just as the last one died, he became aware of another sound; a soft opening of a door somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Manse. For all the bulk of him, and the ancient jest about his elephantine tread, John could move swiftly and silently enough when he liked, and in a minute he was close to the garden wall and peering into the gloom beyond.

Yes, the Manse door was open, and out stepped a tall figure. The wan-faced moon which shone fitfully in the sky chose, at that moment, to shine, and John saw that it was indeed the Doctor; his cap pulled well over his eyes, his coat collar turned up to his ears, and a steadfast, purposeful set in his shoulders, which told more eloquently than words that the old minister was setting out on some especial errand.

The policeman watched him go down the street, and pondered as to his destination. " Where in all the world is the minister going to at this time o' night?" he asked himself. " Some one must be sick or in trouble."

A sleeping town seems quite different from the same town awake. Ghosts and shadows are everywhere; familiar houses and shops, especially shops, take on an unfamiliar aspect. Queer folks are doing a queer marketing at this time, and John, who came from Skye, shivered and turned briskly on his heel.

The Doctor passed down the street, and turned into the station at the foot. A few sleepy porters were standing about, but the place looked eerie; even the bookstall, usually a bright spot, was sleeping behind its wooden shutters, and in deep shadow. The few lights only made darkness visible, and when the south train glided into the platform it had a somnolent air. From behind the drawn blinds sleepy heads were raised to peer forth to read the name of the station, and to sink to sleep again. They were bound for Inverness, and the regions beyond; it was well to let them sleep and forget their sorrow!

Only one passenger alighted. From a carriage near the end a young man had stepped out, and after a hurried look about him had slipped into the shadow of the left-luggage room. There was no one meeting him? Well, it was all right! He would show folks, his father, for instance, that he wasn't the first, and he wouldn't be the last . . . but how cold it was.

Just then a tall figure swooped down on him, and with smiling face and warm outstretched hand was greeting him. " Hugh, my boy, I couldn't see you at first! How are you? Yes, isn't it cold? Come away

at once ! I wanted you to come and have breakfast with me, but your mother wouldn't allow me. She must needs do that ; that's how she's not down meeting you too."

The traveller had no luggage. As they passed under the light from the station clock, the Doctor stole a glance at his face. There was something so haunted, yet something so pathetically young in the misery of the lad's face, the old minister felt his throat grow suddenly tight.

" How strong the wind is ! " he exclaimed. " May I take your arm ? " The warm human contact brought the most blessed comfort to the young man, and into his heart, which had been seething with bitterness, there stole the first ray of peace.

Arm in arm they passed out of the station. Peter Macleod, the porter, who was an agnostic (he said so himself) and didn't believe in kirks or ministers, looked after them with a strange soft look in his eyes. " Gosh ! " he exclaimed, " the verra sicht o' that minister is as good as a sermon ! D'ye see him airm in airm wi' Hugh Burgess, an' him new hame frae the jile ?"

All unconscious of this, the Doctor and his companion had turned into the dark street. A doctor's motor flashed towards them, and a voice from the inside of it hailed the minister. " He's gone, Dr. Lindsay, just about half an hour ago. You might look in when you have time and see the poor wife." Then the motor passed on.

The young man clutched his companion's arm. " It's—it's not my father ? " he whispered hoarsely.

" Tut, tut," said the Doctor easily, " of course not ! Your father is quite well. It's old Mr. Hall, the

grocer, who has passed. He had been ill for a long time."

The lad gave a sigh of relief. They were coming near the end of their journey; they could hear the cry of the river as it flowed by, and Hugh's home was by the Riverside.

"How is my mother, sir?" he asked.

"Wonderful! All mothers are wonderful! I think if our Lord had been telling the story of the prodigal's mother instead of his father He would have said, 'The son took his journey into a far country and his mother went after him and took him back!'"

"I know my father is angry," the other said; and then he added bitterly, "the way of transgressors is hard."

"Yes," the Doctor agreed somewhat drily, "and for that they have only themselves to blame. God gave each of us a will and a conscience, and if we choose to follow our own will, and never heed our conscience, then, the way is hard."

Dr. Lindsay was far too skilful a surgeon of sick souls to allow any wound to fester; he knew that he must deal straightly with Hugh Burgess, and he did. But he did not inflict one unnecessary pang, and very tenderly did he bind up the wound afterwards.

To old Adam Burgess, once farmer of Burnbraes, and the "nesty buddy" of another tale,[1] now living in retirement in Rose Cottage, his son's conduct had brought anguish of soul. Coming as he did, of a long line of self-respecting, God-fearing ancestors, who had looked the whole world in the face, his was an experience which bewildered him, dazed him, and left the

[1] "The Doctor Visits" in *The Doctor*.

very innermost soul of him raw and bleeding. To his dying day, Adam Burgess could never see a policeman without becoming physically sick. Ay, the iron had entered his soul; and it was his only son who had brought this shame upon him! And because "to be wroth with those we love doth work like madness in the brain," the old man's steady, relentless, unforgiving attitude towards Hugh had often driven the Doctor in desperation from the house. Be sure he did not leave the matter there. But God's time had not come yet, and what sort of reception the son was to get when he reached the home he had clouded no one could tell.

At the corner of the street they cannoned into the policeman, who gave a satisfied grunt, and just before they turned up the Riverside they saw, standing in a ribbon of yellow light the figure of a blue-cloaked nurse. "Don't let any one disturb them," she was saying; "and I'll be round about nine o'clock to bath the baby."

There was a small smile on the Doctor's face as he listened, and then he quoted, "'Only winds and rivers, life and death.' Another little ship launched on the sea of life. God keep it safe!"

They had almost reached Rose Cottage when a shadow detached itself from the other shadows about the gate, and with a passionate cry of "*Hughie!*" his mother had flung herself into her son's arms. The Doctor turned his back on mother and son, and became absorbed in watching the morning star which was beating and pulsing whitely in the sky. . . . He had reached now the most difficult part of his mission and, like his Master, he had need of a few moments of quiet prayer.

He must have got assurance that all was to be well, for his face, when he turned it to them, was serene. " A cup of tea, please," he said in the most everyday fashion. " Come along, Hugh."

A cosy meal was laid out in the sitting-room, and a bright fire was blazing on the hearth. Yet there was a tense emotional strain in the little house, which the Doctor sensed ; much was at stake. " Father, give me wisdom," he breathed. He knew that the door of the bedroom, opening off the sitting-room, was slightly ajar ; he knew, though how he knew he did not know, that Adam Burgess was behind that door, and that he was watching, with relentless eyes, the whole scene.

Hugh and his mother, still clinging to each other, sat down on the sofa near the window, and exchanged glances. No man can sin and suffer alone, and Hugh Burgess learned that bitter lesson as he looked at his mother. He had left her comely, fair-haired, and middle-aged ; he found her now a little old, old woman, with a face sad beyond all telling, and with trembling hands and head.

" Oh, mother, mother, what have I done to you," he sobbed, throwing his arms round her. " You mustn't love me like that—I'm not worth it ! "

" Hush, hush, Hughie," she whispered, fondly stroking his closely cropped hair. " You are."

The watcher in the room beyond gave a little gasp, which only one person heard, and that person said, after a little pause, " Are we or are we not to get something to eat ? "

" Oh, forgive me, Doctor," Mrs. Burgess said, wiping

her eyes and coming to the table with a very April face, "Come, Hughie, sit down, my dear."

"We'll ask God's blessing," the Doctor said, and knelt down. So did the others, their hands close clasped.

The Fatherhood of God was always, as I have said before, the supreme thing with the Doctor; perhaps it was the secret of his own happy inner life. In the prayer which he offered up, he dwelt upon this beloved theme. "*Like as a Father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, Thine anger endureth but for a moment, Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity . . . because Thou delightest in mercy . . . Thou—Who spared not Thine own Son . . .*" There are some things of which it is not lawful to speak —this was one of them. . . .

Let me say, however, that long before he reached the "Amen" another worshipper had joined the little band, and was kneeling, his body shaken with sobs, close by the Doctor's chair. And out of the darkness and the desolation of the night came One like unto the Son of God, the unseen Guest who came not as a wayfaring man who tarries for only a night, but as one who comes to abide, and that for evermore.

* * * * * *

Hugh Burgess calls his sheep farm in Australia after the old home farm. He is doing well; a somewhat silent, shy man, one whose word is seldom heard. But ask any wild young fellow, who has suddenly pulled up, and is doing better, ask him about Hugh Burgess, and you will hear a tale that will warm your heart.

He keeps a bundle of letters inside his Bible. In

one cherished and oft-read letter in the Doctor's large and spacious hand he reads :

" Your father has joined our Young Men's Fellowship Guild. I asked him to pray the other Sunday morning, and he prayed for you. At least what he said was ' For those whom we carry in our hearts night and day, but who are separated from us by lands and seas, we crave a Sabbath Day's blessing.' If the name of the person your father carries in his heart all the time and prays for all the time is not *Hugh*, then I don't know what it is ! He must stop praying in such moving fashion ; I felt that in another moment the tears which filled my eyes might fall and I would be shamed before all my young men ! "

Very tenderly Hugh puts this precious letter back into its place, which is in the Book of Psalms, close by that wonderful psalm which says, " *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.*" Through the love and forgiveness of his earthly father he has groped his way to the love of his heavenly Father—who has " such pity."

The Wind upon the Heath.

"Life is sweet, brother: there's day and night, brother, both sweet things: sun, moon and stars, brother, all sweet things: there likewise the wind upon the heath."

—*Borrow.*

"HOO are ye a' the day?" Johan, the Lady of the Dish Basket stood smiling, with arms akimbo, her basket already established on the door-step. Johan meant business.

"It's a fine day, Johan, but I'm not needing any dishes," I answered hurriedly. The pan of jelly I had left on the kitchen range was at the critical stage when anything might happen.

Johan laughed tolerantly. "I'm gled ye think it a fine day! Some micht think it a wee saft," and then, abashed, I noticed that it was indeed raining steadily. "I wis speirin' wis ye a' weel," Johan went on, "It's a lang time since I seen ye!"

Johan had the most wonderfully infectious smile, and in spite of my unwillingness I had to respond—and was lost!

"Come in and tell me where you have been," I said, and led the way, somewhat hurriedly, to the kitchen, just in time to prevent the apple jelly from turning itself into toffee.

"Ye didna see onything aboot me in the papers?"

Johan asked anxiously. She had a modest dislike to paper publicity.

She swung her heavy basket beneath the table as easily as if it had been a feather. She was a tall, strongly built woman, about fifty, with something big and spacious about her, a creature of the open, with the long swinging stride of a hill dweller. Folks said her father had been a laird's piper, and Johan had inherited his step (though not alas his name!) There was something about her which always hinted at tragedy; she had been born for great things but not for happy ones. In her younger days she must have been a bonny lass, with her debonair air, her flashing brown eyes, white teeth and wavy black hair. To her husband, Isaac Williamson, a weasel-faced little wisp of a man, with trustless eyes, she was blindly devoted. It has been hinted that he was not her first husband, nor even her second; Johan never did things by halves. About her matrimonial arrangements she was wonderfully silent. Upon Isaac she lavished all the mother-love she would have given her bairns if she had had any, and her dutiful wifely love as well.

"Ye hevna seen ma name in the papers since Februar'," she said proudly, "an' then it wis only a breach o' the peace!"

She listened to my congratulations with a modest smile. "A' ma freens is pleased," she said, "Mrs. Wood an' a'. Aye, she's a rale leddy—mony's the time she's taen me hame on her airm, when I wis—drunk."

Johan was no hypocrite; her honesty disarmed criticism. "I've gien that up noo," she went on eagerly. "I hevna tasted since Februar', an' then I couldna," she

smiled whimsically. " I wis a' that month in the jile, an' ye maun be sober there ! "

" At the back o' the New Year," she went on, " Isaac selt his powny an' we went on the spree. I canna keep sober in yon toon," she cried passionately. " There's pubs. an' bars at every corner an' fowk ready tae tempt ye, speshully if they think ye hae twa three bawbees. If ye dinna drink, ye'll see them nudgin' ane an' ither an' winkin' at yer back an' makin' a fool o' ye ! When that happens, I tak' siccan a drought in ma verra hert that only a dram can cure it ! I'm a marked wumman in Gileston, I'm tellin' ye ! The bobbies a' ken me, an' watch me ! Weel, I wis walkin' doon the street an' I met that cock-eyed, wooden-legged scoundrel o' a Robbie White—the man that aye leads Isaac astray, an' says he wi' a nesty fleering lauch an' a wink, ' Weel Johan, are ye sober yet ? ' an' says I," she paused and looked at me apologetically " Sure's deth, mistress, this wis a' I did." She put her two hands tandem fashion (shall we say ?) the thumb of her left hand bearing somewhat firmly on the tip of her nose, causing that feature to become almost violently retroussé, then she uttered, with the most roguish twinkle in her eye, the magic word " *Toor-il-oo* ! "

" That wis a' " she cried. " Yon dowg o' a bobbie—ye'll mebbe no' ken the Gileston bobbies ?—weel it wis yon reid-headed tod—they ca' him ' Red Geordie,' he couped me ! They planned the thing, him an' Robbie White, an' it wis ' *Johan Williamson up again, breach o' the peace.* Thirty days ! "

Johan could tell a tale with dramatic power, and the way in which she mimicked the various voices and actions in this somewhat sordid little drama, was too

much for my gravity. Seeing which Johan girded herself up for fresh efforts.

" A breach o' the peace is no' siccan a bad thing as being cruel tae a bairn or a dowg, or being drunk or—or " her eyes grew merry, " slappin' a bobby's fat cheeks ! That's a awfa' sin ! Thirty days an' *no option !* Whiles—whiles I think it's worth it—it's siccan a satisfaction, speshully if it's yon Red Geordie !" A wicked jade, this Johan, but no one can deny she had a diverting way with her !

" Are ye no' for ony dishes the day ? " she suddenly asked ; after all business was business ! " Bowls, puddin' dishes, cheena cups, a crystal rose bowl—they're all the rage noo ! Here's a beauty, cut crystal ! "

" Oh Johan," I said reproachfully.

" Weel, they telt me it was crystal," she fenced. So we left it at that.

" What is that yellow dish—that one wrapped in paper ? " I asked. She dived into the basket, and laid upon the table as tenderly as if it had been a baby, one of the most biliously yellow jugs I have ever seen. Elephants and tigers, all the same size, corvorted round it. The elephants (you knew them by their tusks) were evidently pursuing the tigers, a fact which these amiable animals seemed to find vastly entertaining. They wore frills round their necks—or perhaps they were whiskers ?

" A jungle scene," I said in my best " company " voice. Something complimentary was evidently expected of me. But if I thought thus to parley with Johan and truth, I soon found my mistake.

" No, nor a jungle scene," she snorted angrily.

That's a puckle kiln cracks ye're lookin' at. I wadna sell that jug for a hunner punds," she went on.

" That's good," I replied drily.

Johan's eyes flashed, and my heart smote me. After all, tastes differ.

" I meant those animals, those elephants and tigers, Johan." Her temper died down as quickly as it sprang up.

" Oh that bastes ! That's coos an' horses—the kind they hae in far-off places like France an' China." After which statement there seemed nothing more to be said.

To cover a somewhat awkward pause, I offered and she accepted a taste of my apple jelly. Johan was as fond of sweet things as a child. While she disposed of the " jelly piece," she told me the story of the jug.

When Johan was in jail she had evidently done some thinking. If she were to keep straight, then she must leave the town. Isaac might not be willing ; but she was the chief bread winner, and she meant to have her own way. With the " wind upon the heath " blowing clean and sweet, life would be an easier thing than in the squalid little room with its hateful smells of rags, rabbit skins and other abominations. She had not spent all her money ere she was " couped," and she knew where a pony and a cart could be got cheap. Then with a tent, a basket of dishes, the " heaven above and the road below," life would become a high adventure.

Isaac was not very willing. He was troubled with a mysterious complaint known as " a tumult in his inside," and the only medicine that could cure him was a dram. Johan took her own way of dealing with the

situation. She went into no particulars as to her method.

The weather that March was wonderfully good, and the open life restored Johan's health, and steadied her nerves. She was passionately fond of nature, and a happy song was often on her lips as she swung along from farm-house to farm-house, jesting, bargaining, laughing and joking, and then returning to the tent at night and the sweet companionship of " Moon and stars, brother, and the wind upon the heath." Oh life was good again !

The day of days wherein Johan had her wonderful adventure was a Sabbath afternoon. She knew the day, because the ploughmen were not working in the fields, and into the little schoolhouse at Earn Brae, decorous country folk, clad in their best clothes, had gathered for a Sunday service. Isaac had gone to " see a man aboot a horse " always a good excuse, and Johan was alone.

It had been raining, and the wind was full of the gracious scents of glad spring. Birch trees made the air sweet, the pungent odour of burning whins hung over the moor, and by the burn-side bog myrtle buds were bursting into leaf, and if there is a scent in the whole world to match this I should like to know its name !

The brown burn was telling itself secrets as it chuckled past, laughing at the complaining notes of the muir fowl who were wailing overhead. In a clump of last year heather an adventurous bee was searching for honey. Oh, a glad glamorous world, all clean and new ! A wave of longing swept over Johan as she stepped along, water-pail in hand. If only she could be made new

and clean again, get another chance like the moor, how wonderful that would be! The wind upon the heath had stirred her strangely; the ache of unshed tears was behind her eyes. Whiles—whiles she feared this " drought " would get the better of her!

When she reached the spring she was surprised to see an old man sitting on the bank. By his dress she knew he was a minister; she eyed him doubtfully. The meeting in the school was evidently over.

The minister returned her look, but with so much friendliness in his expression, Johan, always responsive to kindness, felt her heart warming towards him, " I was wanting a drink," he began, " but the water is so far down I cannot reach it. Would you——? " He paused and smiled at her. " Would she—aye! Mair than that," she assured him, and with swift feet she flew back to the tent to get the yellow jug. It was the best she had—she wished passionately it had been gold!

Carefully she lowered the pail and then filled the jug with water clear and cold, with the magic and the mystery of the moor in it.

The old minister thanked her, and then taking off his hat, he closed his eyes. Johan had once seen and heard a Salvationist praying at a street corner in Inverness. He had shouted as if his God were far off. The God this old minister prayed to must be very near, for though she listened eagerly, she could catch no word.

" What's so good as water when you are thirsty? " he said, as with a gracious smile he handed her back the jug.

" I wish it wad slocken my thirst," she answered wistfully. " I hevna tasted a drop o' whisky since Februar', but whiles the drought is gey bad." How it

happened she never knew, but in a moment she was telling him all about her life, and Johan was no hypocrite, she told an unvarnished tale. He listened sympathetically and did not seem shocked, only sorrowful, and once he murmured softly, " Poor soul."

Was there a chance for her, she asked, and he told her that where sin abounded, grace did there much more abound. He read to her, too, the sweetest story she had ever heard, of another woman at a well, and of the wonderful happenings which followed that meeting ; of the water of life which could quench all thirsts, and so make her new again. Then he had knelt and prayed, but it was exactly as if he had been talking to some near Friend, to whom he committed Johan and all that was a care and a burden to her. " He telt me," Johan said, " that if I prayed tae Him, He wad tak' the drought outen ma hert, an' I did, an' He's doin' it," and so she ended a tale which left me rather silent.

" That must have been Dr. Lindsay from Gileston," I said, presently.

" Aye, he wis waitin' for his freens tae come wi' a motor tae tak' him hame." She lifted the yellow jug and put it back in her basket. " Ye ken noo why I like it ? " she said.

" And the Doctor ? "

Her face quivered. " I—I—jist canna—speak—aboot—him—bit—gin—I—could—do—onything ! "

* * * * * *

From the Doctor himself I heard the rest of the tale. He had been deeply impressed by Johan's personality, by her amazing honesty and humility, and by her anxiety to learn. " I had been tired after the service,"

he confessed, " the folks at the meeting had all enjoyed an excellent dinner and were sleepy and unresponsive, so you can understand how Johan's keen, living interest refreshed and helped me. Did you ever know, by the way, that Isaac thrashes her? Well, he does; she told me, however, that if it pleased him it did her no harm. All the same, I'm going to have a word with Isaac on the subject." From this and another remark, I gathered that the Doctor knew more of Johan's affairs than any one else.

Christmas week brought Johan to my back door. " Where are you camping just now? " I asked, and she told me, in a voice which forbade questions, that they were back in the town. Over a cup of tea she became more expansive. There was a pained look in her eyes which reminded me of a dog that had been ill-used. The "powny" had died, Isaac's "tumult" had grown worse, and so she had been forced to return to the squalid slum life with all its degrading environments. " But I'm keepin' richt," she assured me, and I knew it was true, " an' I'm savin' ma bawbees tae buy another powny." She smiled wistfully. " I'm keepin' ma money in the yalla jug. I see the Doctor often, an' he prays for me, an' I ken the Lord will gie mair heed tae him than tae me."

When she rose to go I noticed for the first time that she had some difficulty in lifting the basket of dishes. " No, it wasna too heavy, bit—bit—she had hurt her side—oh it wis naething." There was something about Johan that day I shall never forget, a gravity, a sweetness, and a certain aloofness which were memorable. It was with the greatest difficulty I persuaded her to accept her train fare to Gileston. " You must

not dream of walking seven miles, Johan, and your side hurting you." She turned away her head, and I saw her eyes were full of tears.

"Goodbye," she said huskily, "and thank you kindly." I watched her go out at the gate. Her "piper's" step had gone, she dragged herself along the road.

When she returned to her stuffy room that evening, Isaac was out. She had left him ill in bed. She went to a neighbour's house, and was told that Robbie White had been out and in all day, and that finally the two had gone out, "lauchin' an' jokin'." Like a stricken animal, Johan rushed back to her room. The "hidie hole" where she had kept the yellow jug was empty, the jug itself, smashed into fifty pieces, lay under the bed, and its contents, which had meant so much to her, the "wind upon the heath, sun, moon, and stars, day and night" were gone—gone to supply a drunken husband and his bottle companion.

* * * * * *

Presently she went out, no one knew where. Isaac, staggering home drunk and penniless, threw himself on the bed. It was supposed that he had put his lighted pipe in his pocket, and that that had set the bed clothes on fire. Johan, at some nameless hour, returning from her Gethsemane, found the room full of smoke. Blindly she groped her way to the bed and tried to lift the sleeping man; but the weight of him was too much, and she fell beneath it, fell among the ruins of the yellow jug, cutting her head and hands on its broken fragments.

From out of his drunken stupor Isaac slowly returned to consciousness, and stumbled forth to a place of

safety, leaving Johan bleeding to death. It was by a queer irony of fate that Robbie White found her. They carried her to the hospital, and kind hands did all in their power to alleviate her sufferings. It was then it was discovered she had a terrible bruise on her left side. " This has been done some time ago," the nurse said. Johan, who had so often covered Isaac's ill deeds, could do so no longer ; for she lay unconscious, a broken wreck, on the little hospital bed. Then from immeasurable distances and desolations, her soul came shuddering back to its earthly tabernacle, and she opened bewildered eyes, and asked where was she. She asked for the Doctor, and he came. " I'm going," she whispered, " *Is—is—it—all—richt ?* "

" It is all right, Johan. You have fought a good fight, you have kept the faith." Then he read to her her favourite story in the fourth of John's gospel.

" That wife did mair nor me," she whispered, " she telt the men o' the city, an' I never even telt Isaac. Whaur's Isaac ? " she asked suddenly, anxiously, the old protective love still strong in her. " Tell them no' tae jile Isaac," she pleaded, " he's a puir craitur an' disna ken better."

Exhausted, she lay back and asked that the window might be opened wide, " I love the win'," she said, and for her once more the wind was on the heath, and she was back in the camp at Earn Brae. By the well side there sat a man, a young man, tired and weary looking. " Give me to drink," he pleaded, and she had taken the yellow jug (it was all new and mended) and had filled it full. When he stretched out his hand for it, she noticed blood trickling from a wound in the palm.

" Your hand is sair ? " she asked.

" An old hurt," he replied. " It sometimes bleeds, but you have made it better."

" I didna—do—onything," she faltered.

" You said ' *Forgive*,' and ' *He knew not*.' "

Johan recovered consciousness towards evening, and whispered to the Doctor her vision. It was but a passing flicker. She gazed for a moment intently, as if into the unseen ; a strange light shone in her eyes. She whispered softly—amazedly, " There He is—that's Him—the man I gaed the water to "—a pause and then a lower whisper, " *He's kind*—oh, *He's kind*," and so she passed.

The Doctor and his Editor.

WHEN my friends are confessing my sins for me, which they do with quite unnecessary frequency, they always draw special attention to my untidiness. " Just look at the way you keep your cupboards," they will say, " especially that one by the window. Why, no one can open it without getting an avalanche of letters poured forth."

" No one has any right to open that cupboard," I retort angrily, " and besides they are all letters about the Doctor. I simply cannot burn them."

Still nursing a feeling of resentment I opened the cupboard door and let the Niagara of letters fall into my lap. Sitting on the floor I made up my mind to sort them into two heaps, these on my right to be kept, these on the left to be burned.

The first letter I opened must have been written in 1915 ; there is no date (it's from a woman, who puts ' Wednesday ' at the top) and underneath is the name of a Nursing Home. Because she met " the Doctor " there, and because he helped and cheered her and made her forget her burdens, she writes me a little note in pencil (for which she asks pardon) " One of the nurses lent me the book," she writes. " She said it would

make me laugh and cry. It has done both, and it has given an uplift to my soul."

Clearly I cannot burn this letter.

The next is dated 12th January, in a man's firm handwriting, and it comes from a southern city. There is a coat-of-arms upon the envelope; that, and the embossed address and the quality of the note-paper would tell any one without being in the least like Sherlock Holmes, that the writer is some one of consequence. Yet he says "I have loved reading your book so much I am sending it to a number of friends in England. I envy you the authorship of the Doctor." A nice man this unknown correspondent, to love my Doctor. Presently he goes on to say "If there should be another edition, you might correct the punctuation of the metrical psalm in "The Doctor Visits."

There was another edition, and I did correct the punctuation, and I now take this opportunity of thanking my unknown friend. It would be discourteous to burn this letter.

Next comes one from Toronto, written in July. It begins with "To the Authoress of the Doctor" and the name at the end is hard to decipher. However, "the Doctor" has brought great joy to an old lady whose forbears came from Scotland, and as the book was light to hold, she could read it in bed. She wished to thank the writer, and to say that while loving all the stories, she loved especially "Davy's Dog." As I happen to know Davy and his dog rather well, I decided to keep this letter too.

Here is a refreshing letter. It begins straight away, "Pardon an old woman's inquisitiveness, but will you

tell me is the Doctor a real person? In any case accept my grateful thanks for introducing me to him."

The address is St. Andrews. Cautious warm-hearted Fife! She goes on to tell me that her son bought the book for her, *having first read it himself*. I like that mother and son! I wonder does he always censor her reading for her? Anyway I must not burn this letter.

There is no doubt what I am to do with my next letter. It must be kept if I have to get a cupboard built for itself. The date is written in precise Roman numerals (things I can never understand) and the writer addresses me as "Dear Sir." He calls "the Doctor" a booklet and writes to point out the many errors which it contains. Who read the proofs he wonders; some grossly inaccurate person. Page, paragraph, and line are duly noted, *there are ten of them*—though there may be more which he has overlooked. He suggests that the writer should add a vocabulary for the benefit of English readers. He fears that even some Scottish folks may find a few words difficult to understand. (My poor country!) What, now, does a "limb" mean and what sort of an animal is "a clockin' hen?" There are actually two dozen words full of mystery which he advises me to explain. He asks me—(how unnecessary)—what is "a nesty buddy?" He adds, however, in quite a kindly way, that if I carry out these improvements, the booklet will be quite a pleasant one and leave a clean taste in the mouth.

Having put this letter in a careful place, I take up the next which comes from a Yorkshire vicarage.

The Vicar, an understanding man, does not ask me is the Doctor a real person. "I know and love your Doctor," he writes. "He reminds me of an old vicar I had whom I loved when I was a curate," and he goes on to tell me of the death of his friend—a beautiful story; too sacred to be set down here. After reading this letter I had to pause a little to rummage for my ever elusive handkerchief.

Following this is a letter from one who knew the Doctor in the days of his flesh. It is dated 1918, and asks that more stories may be added to a book which "is a gem of purest ray serene." "I knew the Doctor" he goes on to say "and received many kindnesses from him." The address at the top of this letter is "House of Commons," and alas! before the enlarged edition was ready, this kind writer had passed in; probably has discussed the stories with the Doctor by this time, too! It would be sacrilege to burn this dear letter.

My next letter is from Sussex, and the name is not that of a lady but of a gentleman who begins fussily (that's what made me think my correspondent was of my own sex) "Do excuse me asking questions at such a time. Is the chapter 'Davy's Dog' history? A friend to whom I sent the book 'shied' at this story and said it spoiled the whole thing." I remember trying to reassure this doubting Thomas; (he enclosed a stamped envelope) for Davy's Dog is still an exceedingly healthy, hefty animal who disputes the ownership of the study hearth-rug with the lawful owner, and groans if you so much as give him the wee'st of pokes!

Canada sends me a greeting, a breezy delightful letter it is too, with a Highland signature. It warms

my heart, and so dear, unknown clansman, I wave you a warm message, and keep your letter.

From Drogheda, Ireland, is the next letter. A Presbyterian minister finds time amid many duties to write and thank me for a book which has " captured " him, and he signs himself " Yours indebtedly." I have always had a warm corner in my heart for Ireland. I shall keep this letter.

My publisher, with whom I share many queer epistles, sent me one which has made me rock with laughter many a time. " Sir," this letter begins, and you can see that even the writer's pen was spluttering with wrath—" Having seen your advertisement for a book called " The Doctor," and thinking it might contain some simple prescriptions for chilblains, chapped hands and such like, I sent for a copy for my nephew, who is a soldier. When the book came, I find it is by way of being a religious pamphlet *and absolutely no use!* Please return me my money. I would suggest that you get the author to change the title for something less mis-leading." He adds, as an afterthought, " If you have any really good book at the same price, you can send it to me instead of the money."

As I read this letter once more, my eyes met those of the Doctor from his place on the mantelpiece, and I solemnly declare he was laughing; I am sure he wanted to know what " really good little book " this man got for his shilling.

" Asker, Christiania, Norway," is the address at the top of my next letter, and it comes from a Norwegian lady who has been interested in " The Doctor," when the stories first appeared in the " Sunday At Home."

" What a dear splendid man he must have been," she writes in her beautiful careful handwriting, and she goes on to tell me how much she would like to translate the book into her own mother tongue, so that her own country folks "might know and be the better of knowing this wonderful personality." It gave me—it still gives me queer thrills to think of the Doctor making his way among a strange people, yet not strange either, for the Doctor's gospel is a universal one.

From Elgin, town of happy memories, comes a gem of a letter. It was written by a dish-hawker, who, all honour to him ! is fighting a stiff battle in one of Elgin's slums. The very surroundings of his home must make it doubly hard to follow the gleam. " I really don't know how to express my grateful thanks, as I got little schooling when I was young," he writes, in beautiful copper plate hand, very thin as regards the up-strokes and very fat as regards the down-strokes ! He tells me in words which, if somewhat originally spelled, cannot hide his meaning, that the story which helped him most was the one about the Young Man with the scarred hands and the wonderful smile. I knew from others how well and bravely this poor man is fighting on, and it did cheer me to be told by him that " Your book was like a sunbeam from heaven, and made me happy, for I knew the Tall Young Man was the same Christ Who said ' Lo, I am with you always.' "

It is a proof of the greatness of the Doctor himself that a message should be sent from a Roman Catholic Abbey in Wales. " I cannot resist writing to tell you how much I enjoyed reading ' The Doctor,' especially ' The King's Messenger.' I am sending for

some more copies to give away." From a Baptist Manse in the same country comes a similar message. " All one in Christ Jesus," the Doctor would say.

" I take off my hat to ' The Doctor,' is how the next letter begins, " and to you as having revealed him for our encouragement." The writer is a young Civil Servant in India, whose first name is David and whose mother (she has just passed) loved "David Macintyre."[1] He notes, too, that Macintyre means " The son of the carpenter." How glad I am some one has at last noticed that David's name was so apt. The beautiful Gaelic meaning has at last been revealed. Burn this David's letter ?——

It was on a Monday morning the next letter arrived I remember it well ! " Himsell " was in bed, being weary with his " fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus " the preceding Sunday, and I raced up the stair to read him this wonderful letter, and found when I sat down on the foot of the bed I couldn't after all ! That this great man should write me and should say such words about the Doctor—well I would that my tongue could utter the thoughts that arose in me. But it could not, and after all it was " Himsell " who read the letter, and laughed at me ! The " Sclater's House "[2] was the story this great man loved best, and he spoke generous words about all the stories, and he told me how the book held him from the first page to the last. This is a letter I shall bequeath to my grandchildren, if I ever possess any !

A London minister writes to ask where can he get the tune " Effingham," the bass of which is so wonder-

[1] " The King's Messenger," in *The Doctor.*

[2] " The Doctor Visits," in *The Doctor.*

ful. He is sending copies of "The Doctor" to his class of young students. "It is better than any text book," he says. What of that man who said he couldn't understand what a "limb" was or a "nesty buddy?" I wonder how those London students got over the difficulty.

A blind lady who has had such a happy time with the Doctor, gets her secretary to write and ask permission to put the book into Braille. I can imagine the Doctor's pleasure, and how he would murmur "I am come to bring sight to the blind," and he would glorify His Father.

Another correspondent wonders can I be the lady he once met in Nova Scotia. He rebukes me for using "The Maister and the Bairns,"[1] as if it were my own writing. No, I certainly did not meet this person either in Nova Scotia or any other where. But I sit rebuked about the poem. Inverted commas were not enough. This is the reason why in the eleventh edition there is a note as to the authorship of this lovely poem.

And so the pile grows; how can it be otherwise when every letter has something different to tell me? This, for instance, with its homesick, wistful note which comes from New Guinea, and has been wandering from Australia to New Zealand and thence to Scotland and Elgin from some lonely keeper of an outpost and the Doctor has come to tell him "All's well." Another, with the ominous words "C—— Sanatorium," at the top, tells of a patient who is getting better, but still sleeps on the verandah, or rather lies on the verandah, and when he cannot sleep the Doctor keeps him

[1] "The King's Messenger," in *The Doctor*.

company, and he quoted "And with the watcher a watch he keeps,"[1] and tells me how the words have helped him.

Another who calls himself "a dweller in the tents of Kedar," but whose post-mark is an African town, and who has come originally from Inverness, writes to rebuke me for the way I have spelled or rather misspelt some Gaelic words. The idea! Didn't "Himsell" edit my Gaelic at the time? However, I forgive this unknown friend, because he tells me that the communion at Gorry Glen has been a great experience for him, "for didn't I know every one that was there from Sutherland, the dour elder to Rory who drove the mail gig?"

I have kept the good wine to the last. It comes to me from across the Atlantic where so many of my countrymen have welcomed the Doctor. The writer of this letter had gone for a holiday to some country place beyond Toronto. One Sunday afternoon he had gone for a walk. He noticed a man doing something to a sickly looking tree, and he stood watching him. Finally, he began to speak, as is the friendly way of that land.

"Where do you come from?" he asked the forester.

"From the Island of Lewis."

"And your name is———?"

"Cameron, sir."

"I have a little book in my pocket which a writer belonging to your clan has written about a great and good man. Would you like to read it?"

"Thank you kindly, sir," said the man politely. His voice lacked enthusiasm, however. Books about

[1] "The Doctor Visits," in *The Doctor*.

great men did not interest him. Then, with the Highland courtesy of his old home, he asked the stranger would he like to come and see his friends; there were two of them, and they shared a shack just a little way off.

Strangely enough, both the other men came from the Western Hebrides too, one from Harris and one from Skye. They received the stranger politely, but there was no disguising the fact that they were not prepared for visitors. The shack was untidy and so were the men. No, they had not been in church. Sunday to them was a day for loafing about. Oh, no, they had not been brought up like that; Cameron, the first man had had a godly father who was an elder in the Free Church, and Mackenzie, the red-headed, blue-eyed young giant who came from Harris had had a godly upbringing too, "and both my parents were members of the church," he added, and told how his mother had been frightened to come forward because she was not worthy, and of how the old minister had told the diffident fearful soul "'Merran,' says he, '*It's for sinners—it's for sinners,*' and so my mother was always coming forward after that," he added, with a beautiful simplicity. The youngest member of the shack had only joined the others in April, and he had not managed to get work. He was from Skye, and his name was Donald Macleod.

"What could he do?" the visitor asked, and then and there he held, as it were, a committee meeting with himself and decided that just such a lad as Donald was needed in his store in Toronto. But this was not Sabbath news, was it? So, promising to return next Sunday, he left them.

Cameron met him at the shack door the following Sunday, and he wore his best clothes, and there was a look in his eyes which had not been there the previous week. The shack was spotlessly tidy, and on the table lay a Bible, "The Doctor," and writing material. Presently the other two men came in, and they also were in their Sunday clothes.

The very atmosphere of the shack seemed changed. "We thought you would like to hear we have all been in church to-day." It was Cameron, the tender of sick trees, who volunteered this information. "Twice," he added.

Mackenzie, after a little silence, tense with emotion, said huskily, "We're taking the Books after this" (that means they were to have family worship). Their visitor nodded. At great moments words seem useless things, besides—— . . . . . .

Donald Macleod's soft voice, sweet with the lilt of the Highlands, said quietly, "Myself, I was writing home the day. I—I was not writing them since a long time. I could not get work and—and I was not liking to be writing them, but now, now that you are giving me the chance of a job, and after reading about what that little bookie is saying of the lads in the bothy at Burnside writing to the home folks, I put home word, and I'll do it every week regular after this."

* * * * * *

The three men accompanied their visitor to his home. None of them referred to "The Doctor," but in parting, after clearing his throat once or twice, Cameron, as being the most experienced, spoke.

"We're thanking you, sir, for yon bookie, and my

blessings be on you for giving it to us—an'—an'—we're thanking the Lord for " The Doctor."

And so the Doctor, not like a wayfaring man who turns aside for only a night, but the honoured guest who has come to abide, has made another place for himself, and the fellowship in that Canadian shack is very dear to God.

Only the other day a curiously phrased letter reached me from Canada, and the signature at the end was Cameron. The writer " taking the liberty of thanking you for a precious message, would be most obliged if you would be telling me the name of the tune the cattleman played on his melodian yon night when the Doctor took shelter in the bothy."

I wave my hand to you, fellow clansman, but wasn't the name of that tune to be a secret ?

So I take up the right hand heap of letters (there are none on my left) and bind them all tenderly with a rubber band, and lay them gently on the top shelf once more. The Doctor, who has been watching me, laughs and says with his wise chuckle, " I thought so."

The Afterglow.

MORE than a decade has passed since the Doctor has left us, yet when we gathered together on a certain Monday evening last December, as one of the speakers so happily put it, "We had still the afterglow of that grand and great life," and in its warmth we glimpsed anew the friend we had thought dead.

> "He is not dead, this friend; not dead
> But on some road, by mortals' tread
> Got some few trifling steps ahead,
> And nearer to the end;
> So that you, too, once past the bend,
> Shall meet again, as face to face, this friend
> You fancy dead."

The previous Sunday a memorial tablet and a baptismal font had been unveiled and dedicated to the "belovéd pastor," and great, ever-to-be-remembered words had been spoken by one peculiarly fitted for the task; but still, like children who have returned to the old home, memories, fragrant, glad, and tender held us with wistful hands, and we could not go away.

So once more we lighted the hearth flame, drew the chairs around it and told and listened to tales of him we loved. We reminded each other of this tale and that other. Because there were so many of us, we met

in the hall of the Church, and it was for mere handiness —nothing more—that the speakers were placed on the platform. There was a row of men—*and of ministers !* There was one woman—that was me. If any one has ever doubted my love for the Doctor let them recall how that evening I sat in awful solitude, " cannon to right of me, cannon to left of me," and what should really have alarmed me most—" Himsell " seated beneath the platform. He would, I knew, on our homeward journey, patiently point out all the mistakes I had made—still, to be associated with the " Doctor " on this night of Commemoration, was an honour I shall never forget, and I now record my gratitude.

The hall was crowded, for besides the folks we saw, there was the " cloud of witnesses." Ghosts ! Why, the place was full of them, so that, as one said, the faces he saw most distinctly, the voices he heard most clearly, were those that had gone—but were not dead. And the spirit of the Doctor was there ; in its sunshine we rejoiced.

One speaker asked, how could one harbour thoughts uncharitable, remembering the graciousness and the humanity of the Doctor ? A certain man " righteous over much " had insisted upon confronting an evil doer with his misdeeds, and that in the presence of the Doctor, who had, all unknown to himself, been hurt by the man's conduct. He listened to the tale, and then shaking his head, he said with his lovely, tolerant smile, " Tut tut, that wasn't evil doing—it was only *stupid blundering*," and in the charity of his judgment, the culprit melted into tears of repentance and another soul was won for God.

One of the Doctor's "old boys" spoke; he is himself a doctor of divinity; but as he told the tale of his young days, he was a laddie again. We liked him all the better because his voice shook just a little over the old memories. Once when the Doctor had been presented with a pulpit robe, he had recalled the story of a certain monk who had said he would always hang his habit on a sunbeam. "'I shall hang my new robe on the sunbeam of my people's charity,'" the Doctor had said. "No man less needed the charity of his congregation, for he appeared before them Sabbath after Sabbath, with the truth new minted from the treasury." Then he told of the Bible Class.

Like the Doctor, himself, it was unique. One Sunday he set the class hunting for the "wiles of the devil." He could count a whole dozen; could any of the class do better? It was a challenge taken up by two of the lads, and the following Sunday they appeared with a list of wiles numbering twenty! Not without honest pride in this result, they handed the paper to the Doctor who received it with apparent gratitude. "It is evident," he said slyly, "that my young friends are better acquainted with the wiles of the wicked one than I am," and a gale of laughter shook the class.

So, like a jewel of many facets, the stories showed the doctor in the manifold sides of his character.

Sunday's speaker's stories had a peculiar interest, for he had been the "one and only" colleague the Doctor had ever had.

The relationship between them had been of the happiest and most intimate description. The love between the old man and the young was like that of Paul and Timothy, and the memory was wholly

gladsome. "I remember," the speaker said, "how the Doctor took me visiting, for the first time. We went to see an old lady, one of the oldest ladies in the congregation, and, at the Doctor's request, I engaged in prayer. It is not always an easy exercise, though no presence could have been kindlier or more sympathetic than my senior colleague's. I referred to the lady as 'Thine agéd servant'—feeling that that at least was a safe expression. On coming out he asked me if he might give me a little bit of advice. 'It's this,' he said solemnly, 'never refer to a woman's age—never! God knows it, and He'll forgive you, *but the woman never will.*' And," added the speaker ruefully, as we shook with laughter, "that lady was ninety years old!"

This speaker touched on a point which has always interested me—that was the Doctor's ability in the midst of laughter (and be sure it was always happiest laughter!) to turn to God in prayer. For him there was no distinction between sacred things and common ones.

"Sacred things were the home where his spirit continually dwelt," and one, at least of his listeners recalled gay words of the Doctor's concerning a certain new blouse which had come to her one Saturday evening, and how, after the banter and the laughter, the Doctor had dropped on his knees to give thanks to God for "earthly love which binds husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister."[1]

And then we were laughing again at the way the Doctor *would* go into houses without ringing bells or knocking knockers—and we heard a new and wonderful

[1] "The Doctor Supplies" in *The Doctor*.

story of how once the Doctor, mistaking a certain door, found himself in a strange house. He was no wise upset over this, but so much could not be said for the man of the house, who was a Roman Catholic. Over the mantelpiece hung a picture of the Madonna, and pointing to it, this man said, "We worship her; she was a wonderful woman." "She was," the Doctor agreed, "*And hadn't she a wonderful Son?*"

"The most difficult people to live with are one's neighbours," the next speaker told us, but he could honestly say the Doctor had been a most delightful one; that was the angle from which he showed us our friend. "He was no stickler for formality, and we liked him all the better for it," and then he told us how the Doctor always left sunshine behind him. "He came to cheer you up, to give you something, to invite you to lunch, or to go for a drive, to tell you of some piece of work you had done well, or to tell you "his latest."

One of his co-presbyters had happy memories to recall. There was a great Communion service in his church, where the Doctor took for his theme, "The Suffering Saviour," and preached a sermon which has its influence to this day.

It was also on this occasion an old lady said to him, "I hear they are collecting money to send you to the Promised Land." The Doctor looked solemn and said, "I hope they are collecting enough to get a return ticket—for I don't think I'm ready to stay there yet."

The Doctor as "supply" was the next facet in our jewel; on this subject I was chosen to speak. Well, the tale has been told in "The Doctor Supplies"—and that afternoon—(this tale is told in "The Doctor and his Editor") rather a wonderful letter had reached

me from Canada. It was my privilege to say once more—" He is not dead, he rests, his works do follow him."

Another of the " old boys " took up the tale. His were memories of happy boyhood days, and of how the Doctor had influenced the young by his clear, convincing doctrines. But his practices spoke more convincingly than his doctrine ! He had been at a funeral one day ; it was that of a poor working man, the father of a young family. The oldest child, a mere laddie was sobbing his young heart out in the cemetery as the grave closed on his father's coffin.

The Doctor, with tears in his own eyes, stood silently by the stricken boy, and then, with a tender arm round his shoulder, he thrust into the boy's hands all the money he had in his pocket, saying in a husky voice, " Take this home to your mother, my boy." Doctrines ? Yes, but who could help loving a man with such practices ?

The testimony of the Doctor's own son gave us the closest and most intimate touch of all. It was hard for him to speak ; but it was his proud privilege too, and we listened entranced to his words.

And so the tales went round, and it was time to say good-bye, and we found, like the Queen of Sheba, that the half had not been told.

The full tale only he himself can tell, as tell he shall at the final reckoning. " Lord, thy pound hath gained—," and he shall hear the Master's " Well done."

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